REMARKS

UPON THE

PLAY of DOUGLAS,

IN A

LETTER by a GENTLEMAN to his Friend in the Country.

SIR,

I Send you, according to your Deſire, a Copy of the PLAY, *DOUGLAS*, with ſome general Remarks upon it.

I am far from having an ill Opinion of the Stage, or Stage-plays in general: I think, good Plays, well acted, afford not only an innocent Amuſement, but may be of great Uſe in improving the Mind, Language, Behaviour and Morals of the Hearers, and eſpecially of our young People.

As for this Play, it is far from being an immoral one; on the contrary, there lie, diſperſed in it, many fine Sentiments and moral Reflections well expreſt.

But conſidering it, as a Critick, it is far from being a compleat Piece. It has not what can be properly called, A MORAL; neither is there in it A HERO; and as to the HEROINE, her Character is neither *natural* nor *commendable*.

The Sum of the Story repreſented ſeems to amount to this, a Lady marries, clandeſtinely, a Gentleman of a great Family, enjoyed him three little Weeks; he was ſoon thereafter killed in Battle, along with her Brother; ſhe happened to be with Child: But being obliged to conceal that from her Father, ſhe ſent it off with its Nurſe, and believed it was drowned in a River, on occaſion of a Storm: She lamented the Loſs many Years; but at laſt was induced by her Father, contrary to her own Inclination, to marry *Randolph*, a worthy and deſerving Nobleman; but ſtill the Lady goes on lamenting her Loſſes for ſeven Years more, when it was at laſt diſcovered that her Boy had been miraculouſly preſerved; and ſcarce has ſhe had the Comfort of ſeeing him, and letting him know who he really was, when he is cruelly killed by a Villain, who is alſo diſpatched in the Scuffle; upon which the poor Lady turns mad, and drowns herſelf.

Now, what is the Moral of this whole Story? What good Meaning has it? I own I can ſee no obvious Inſtruction that ariſes from it; and yet I cannot but commend the Author's Ingenuity, in dreſſing up ſuch a ſimple Story in ſuch a Manner, as, in different Places of the Play, to move the Compaſſion of the Audience, tho' from the *whole*, taking it as *one Piece*, there ariſes no Moral.

Another Fault I find in this Performance, is, That *Douglas*, who is deſigned for the HERO, has done nothing that can make him be conſidered as a Hero.

While he was a Shepherd, he was ſprightly, killed the Captain of a Band of Robbers, took a Liking to warlike Atchievements, and when

when he is ſeeking after an Opportunity for theſe, he happens to reſcue a Nobleman, who was attacked by four Ruffians. Theſe are all the heroick Deeds that he did, before he was acquainted of his Birth; after which he is ſoon cut off.

The Hero of a Play ought always to do ſome very grand and heroick Actions, ſuch as may raiſe a high Eſteem and Affection for him: 'Tis from this that a juſt Sorrow and Compaſſion riſes in the Minds of an Audience, when they ſee the Hero brought into Diſtreſs, or ſuffer unjuſtly; but in this Play, the Hero does nothing of ſuch Moment, as can raiſe any great Degree of Eſteem for him, before he is untimely cut off.

If the Author had not been in ſuch Haſte to diſpatch his Hero, but had carried him to the Wars, made him deſtroy the *Danes*, and relieve his Country, then he would have done ſomething worthy of a Hero.

The Author ſeems to have been ſenſible of this, when he makes *Douglas* die, lamenting that he had not fallen, as his brave Foreſathers fell, turning with great Effort the Tide of Battle: But had it not been a more compleat Piece to have made *Douglas* rather *act*, than only *ſpeak as a Hero*.

As to the HEROINE; the Lady no Doubt met with two great Loſſes, her beloved Husband, and her fine Boy, (this laſt as ſhe thought;) but theſe Afflictions are not ſo uncommon as to merit a perpetual Grief and Lamentation; and when ſhe was prevailed upon, tho' contrary to her own Inclination, to marry a worthy Man, how unaccountable was it in her to perſevere in her ſullen Grief for no leſs than ſeven Years, without giving her deſerving Husband decent Affection, or complacent Kindneſs! When I read thoſe Words of *Randolph*,

> ——————— *Seven long Years*
> *Are paſt ſince we were joined by ſacred Ties;*
> *Clouds all the while have hung upon thy Brow,*
> *Nor broke, nor parted by one Gleam of Joy.*

I cannot but pity the poor Nobleman, and at the ſame time have a juſt Indignation againſt the Lady's unreaſonable Obſtinacy.

This inceſſant Grief of hers for her firſt Husband, may, by ſome romantick Readers, be thought a Piece of high Virtue; but I can never juſtify the indulging any Paſſion that is contrary to Reaſon, and can never anſwer any good Purpoſe.

A Woman may have ſuch a Regard for a firſt Husband, as to reſolve never to marry another; but if ſhe is induced, tho' contrary to her Inclination, to marry another Man, 'tis contrary to all Reaſon, that ſhe ſhould not indulge him with ſome Gleam at leaſt of Joy, eſpecially if he proves a deſerving and affectionate Husband; and therefore, I cannot admire the Character that our Author has drawn of his HEROINE.

As to her ruinous End, it being a natural enough Conſequence of her new Surpriſe and exceſſive Grief, I make no Reflections upon it.

I am, Sir,

Your moſt humble Servant.